

GAC Five-Year Strategic Plan

2013 to 2018

Working for the Arts

The Gabriola Arts Council is a not-for-profit society and registered charitable organization that represents and serves a broad cross-section of the arts community on Gabriola Island.



Gabriola Arts Council: *Working for the Arts*

Introduction

In January 2013, the Board of Directors of the Gabriola Arts Council (GAC) participated in a strategic planning session. The process was guided by professional cultural planner and facilitator Patricia Huntsman.

The session included:

- An assessment of the organization (review of vision, mission, strengths and weaknesses, needs and gaps, and opportunities);
- A presentation and discussion on cultural planning which considered the operating environment in which GAC functions;
- An identification of five goals and supporting strategies for the new strategic plan.

The Board met numerous times over the next few months for further review and discussion, continuing to polish and refine GAC's vision, mission and key strategies, and identify priority goals, strategies and actions.

The 2013-2018 GAC Strategic Plan is titled "Working for the Arts" to highlight:

- The role GAC performs in the community: working to support Gabriola artists in all art forms and at all levels; and ensuring local residents and visitors can engage with the arts and are aware of the Island's rich cultural resources.
- The organization's traditional working board structure from which it seeks to transition towards a more strategic governance model.
- The fact that Gabriola Island has one of the largest concentrations of artists in the local workforce, ranking sixth across Canada (Hills Strategy Research, 2011), underscoring the important role GAC plays in supporting local arts-led economic development.

Working for the Arts is supported on four pillars that serve as the overall performance measures of the plan:

- Professional development opportunities for established artists;
- Education and training opportunities for emerging artists;
- Enhancing the economic well-being of artists;
- Enriching the Gabriola community through the arts.

Situation Analysis

The Gabriola Arts Council benefits from established and thriving programming and solid board leadership. It has been instrumental in building a culture of appreciation for the arts in the Gabriola community—one of the key aims of the Board's 2007-2011 strategic plan. The organization is in a stable growth position with many board and administrative functions in place, and is looking to strengthen its organizational capacity and direct its activities towards becoming a sustainable operation.

External Environment

The operating environment of the Gabriola Arts Council encompasses both the community of Gabriola Island and—in terms of audience—Nanaimo, Vancouver Island and the Lower Mainland. The community in which GAC serves and operates is important to consider given the leadership direction the organization is taking.

The cultural resources and assets of the community include, but are not limited to:

- Established artists and artists' studios;
- Committed volunteers;
- Audiences with wide-ranging and diverse tastes and interests;
- Venues such as the Phoenix Theatre at The Haven, Artworks, Community Hall, AGI Hall, the Surf Lodge, etc.;
- Established programming, events and partnerships;
- Various community arts groups, including for music, literature, visual arts and more;
- Spectacular natural setting;
- GAC's active and engaged membership.

Internal Assessment

GAC is cited amongst peer organizations and administrators as one of the province's leading arts councils, and is known as an active and engaged arts organization serving its community. Part of this recognition relates to the unique function GAC provides in cultural programming services in the absence of a local government. While the Island is part of the Regional District of Nanaimo, there is no manager directly responsible for a cultural services portfolio for the Island. GAC actively tries to fill this void.

The GAC Board is embarking on a transition from a working board structure to a strategic governance model, and is now supported by an associate director. GAC intends to play a more central, leadership and coordinating role in the community for arts and culture-led economic development, with increased partnerships and collaboration in community and cultural events and programming.

Audiences

Personal benefits cited among participants in a large-scale survey on performing arts:

Entertainment, fun = 84%

Emotional/spiritual/intellectual stimulation = 58%

To learn/experience something new = 57%

Bringing energy and vitality to the community = 42%

(Arts Research Monitor, 2010)



Leadership and Resources

GAC is able to draw from a pool of talent on the Island and has a well-established board of directors comprised of community leaders from a variety of professional fields. Board President Kathy Ramsey has, over more than 12 years, provided steady leadership to the organization, taking on many administrative functions. While Ramsey will continue her participation with GAC, she and the other Directors support active board succession and would like to see increased capacity-building within the organization to ensure sustainability. It is taking steps towards having an Executive Director, a role that has recently been formalized. Maintaining volunteer support both at Board and membership levels will be a critical factor in this transition.

GAC benefits from a strong web presence and rich graphic identity. The organization has unrolled a new logo and is working towards including technologies in its marketing mix that will support low-cost, off-Island audience development (e.g. active links to tourism associations).



Vision and Mission Review

The Vision statement in GAC's previous strategic plan is:

To enable inclusive, interwoven, creative opportunities for all Gabriolans.

This statement has served GAC well and the organization is pleased in having fulfilled this vision over the 17 years since its inception. As part of the self-reflection process, the Board concluded that the existing statements were "weak and out of date," and that the organization had outgrown these aims.

Revised Vision of the Gabriola Arts Council:

An enduring and thriving island artscape for everyone.

Revised Mission of the Gabriola Arts Council:

The Gabriola Arts Council's mission is to activate, enhance and inspire the community's cultural vitality through collaboration, leadership and service.

The Mandate of the Gabriola Arts Council has also been revised to reflect its current direction:

- Promote awareness of and participation in the arts.
- Mentor artist and arts organizations to achieve excellence and cultivate a vibrant and sustainable cultural landscape.
- Build the foundation for public and private support for the arts.
- Serve as the cultural voice of the community, advocating on its behalf with government and industry stakeholders.
- Be the "go-to" place for information and resources on arts and culture.
- Work in collaboration with community partners and arts organizations in delivering high-quality and diverse artistic programming.
- Facilitate culture-led economic and community development.
- Offer integrative arts therapy for the health of all Gabriolans.
- Foster pride in the Isle of the Arts!

Working for the Arts: Goals & Strategies

The goals and strategies outlined in this strategic plan represent the steps involved to achieve GAC's overall aim of strengthening organizational capacity and directing its activities towards becoming a sustainable operation. In so doing, the organization will play a more central, leadership and coordinating role in the community for arts and culture-led economic development, with increased partnerships and collaboration in cultural events and programming.

Goal 1 | Build Organizational Capacity

Goal 2 | Diversify and Increase Resources

Goal 3 | Improve Communication and Engagement

Goal 4 | Lead Cultural Planning

Goal 5 | Broaden Audience and Artistic Practice



Building organizational capacity is the primary goal of Working for the Arts and from it, all other goals and strategies flow for the five-year plan (2013-18). “Capacity” refers to the combination and balance of an organization’s governance, artistic and administrative direction, production, marketing and systems as it works to fulfill its mandate and achieve its mission. (BC Arts Council, 2011)

Goal 1 | Build organizational capacity to ensure the long-term operation of GAC

Goal 1 | Strategy 1: Move from a “working board” to a strategic governance model

The key approach in facilitating the board’s transition to become more strategic will require the board to change its culture. The most effective way to accomplish this is change the board’s processes. Therefore, the transition from a working board to a strategic governance board should be viewed as both a functional process through the assignment of core program delivery to volunteer committees and executive director levels (Goal 1, Strategy 2), and attitudinal through the adoption of a new internal board culture.

The strategic role of the board should encompass, and measure its performance against, the following:

1. Set the Strategic Direction of the organization
2. Ensure necessary resources
3. Provide oversight (not supervision)
4. Fulfill its governance role

Goal 1 | Strategy 2: Strengthen core program delivery through volunteer succession planning and leadership development from within the membership base

The delivery of core programs (i.e. IOTA, GTF, Studio Tour) can be delegated to trained “leader” volunteers and/or paid coordinators.

Goal 2 | Diversify and increase resources to ensure GAC’s on-going activities and sustainability

Goal 2 | Strategy 1: Increase membership base and link to volunteer recruitment

Formalizing GAC’s membership program, and in particular creating multi-level member categories with specific benefits and recognition, integrating membership to volunteer recruitment activities, and promoting membership at events and programs, are the major steps in establishing a solid membership base.

Goal 2 | Strategy 2: Identify earned revenue, sponsorship and donor opportunities.

GAC offers accessible ticket pricing for its events and programs. Offering multi-level ticketing options, renting its facility, and identifying new sponsorship opportunities are all strategies that will help diversify its financial resource base.

Goal 2 | Strategy 3: Ensure grant-writing success and identify new opportunities

As the Board moves to a governance model, it will be essential that the grant-writing function be assigned to the associate director or be outsourced to an arts grant writer. Building relationships with granting agencies and developing grant-writing skills within the organization are other important steps.

Goal 2 | Strategy 4: Create an endowment fund to ensure GAC’s future operations and programs

The establishment of an endowment fund where the principal amount of the fund remains intact while the interest of the invested funds are then assigned to maintaining GAC operations and/or specific programs or purposes is an essential strategy for becoming an established arts organization in perpetuity.

Goal 3 | Improve communications and engagement with all stakeholders to raise awareness in the community

Goal 3 | Strategy 1: Better promote GAC and its role on the Island, and engage with key stakeholders, including members, donors and sponsors

In order to raise awareness of the arts council’s role in the community, and in turn attract new donors, program partners, members etc, GAC needs to broaden and improve its communications and engagement activities.

Goal 3 | Strategy 2: Develop and implement communications plan

Goal 4 | Lead Cultural Planning and collaborate with community partners in cultural development to maintain and grow the Island’s cultural resources and assets

Goal 4 | Strategy 1: Play a more central role in the community for culture-led economic and community development

GAC is aiming for the organization to play a more central, leadership and coordinating role in the community for arts and culture-led economic and community development, with increased partnerships and collaboration in cultural events and programming. One of the key steps towards this aim is to develop a cultural plan for Gabriola.

Goal 5 | Broaden audience base and increase artistic offering to deliver diverse programming relevant to existing and new audiences and inclusive of established and emerging art forms and practices

Goal 5 | Strategy 1: Expand artistic programs across ages, audience types and art forms

Goal 5 | Strategy 2: Strengthen audience capacity to ensure on-going success of core programs

Goal 5 | Strategy 3: Develop Healing Power of Arts program in collaboration with community partners



Laura Handford



Joy Olsen



Jennifer Lynch



Morag Orr-Stevens



photo by Richard Pullano

Gabriola Arts Council | PO Box 387 | Gabriola Island, BC | V0R 1X3

250-247-7409 | info@artsgabriola.ca

www.artsgabriola.ca